Enabling the cloud

Any business transformation exercise begins by enumerating and detailing the cloud road map, explains Yasser Zeineldin, CEO, eHosting DataFort

MOVING A BUSINESS to a cloud platform or a multi-cloud platform requires preparation, thought, and a list of objectives, to remain focused and accountable. While the cloud is now a familiar buzzword, many businesses have adopted it as a tool, and not so much as a strategic exercise to help the organisation move to a much higher level of digital agility, flexibility, and revenue. Mapping the cloud journey before executing it is imperative, since it can be the backbone for a much larger organisational change covering end-user job roles, departments, and an end-to-end work culture.

Detail your business objectives

Businesses should start by taking a look at their regional markets and evaluating how many of their competitors have adopted the cloud as a business strategy. This will give them an idea of how far ahead or behind they are from the rest of the pack.
Next it is important to make a complete and exhaustive list of what are the primary business objectives of moving to the cloud. It could be about making available selected business applications to a much larger number of employees based on a more economical cost of cloud-based software. If the business is expanding geographically, it may be about enabling end-users to go-live in a cheaper, more effective, more connected and more rapid fashion manner, by going all-cloud.

On the other hand, the cloud migration exercise may be based entirely on various IT objectives of reducing maintenance and upgrade costs, due to availability of cloud-based software.

Software available from a cloud platform is automatically upgraded and kept secure by the software vendor from whichever part of the world it is accessed. Data saved while using such a cloud platform can be accessed from whichever part of the world the end-user moves to next, while they work outside

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Yasser Zeineldin, CEO of eHosting DataFort .

office or work at home.

Migrating to the cloud offers longer term stability by allowing the business to replicate itself across many more cloud platforms, therefore making it disaster proof. But it can add more complexity in terms of service level agreements, security responsibilities and vulnerabilities, and country level data compliance requirements.

These need to be taken into consideration in the planning exercise.

Next, the business needs to evaluate whether the end-user experience of using the cloud software is superior to whatever it is using at present. The longer its end-user community has been using a particular

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business application internally, the longer it will take for them to adapt to the new environment. This resistance to change needs to be planned for during the migration exercise, in terms of change management and mentoring.

Other than end-users, will customers also be impacted? If yes, then a change management evaluation needs to be made for them as well.

Customers are always looking for superior experience and innovative service offerings, and adoption of the cloud needs to be a step forward in this direction.

Relook at job roles

Adopting and migrating to the cloud empowers the overall organisation and its employees. By default, an IT department wields clout, as it has central control on the delivery and support of IT resources and business applications.

By migrating to the cloud, the control of the delivery of business applications has now moved outside the organisation. This outsourcing initiative, frees up more resources inside the IT department, allowing them to spend time looking at more strategic and longer-term initiatives.

This could be about how to use automation to remove manual and repetitive tasks from an employee's work time. It could be about how to use better analytical tools to enable higher levels of business insights for customer facing teams and senior management executives. It could be about how to manage larger volumes of data being generated through larger number of end-users now accessing cloud-based business applications. This would require building various data architectures and using various cloud-based analytical tools to enable business decision makers to get much better insights into customer behavior or in general organisational performance metrics. These responsibilities require new job roles and possibly new staff as well. ■